

This is what they are going to sneak through in 8 days. And now they are trying to cover their fannies.

PROTECTING AND PRESERVING MEDICARE

(Mr. TIAHRT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Speaker, last spring when the President's Medicare Trustees Board released their report on the impending bankruptcy of the Medicare system, there was and still is stone-cold silence on the other side of the aisle. No ideas, only criticism. In fact, even their buddies in the elite liberal media noticed the startling conclusions reached by the Medicare trustees. They concluded that unless we take serious steps right now to save Medicare, it will go bankrupt in 7 years.

Republicans have not dodged this issue. We have already started to take serious action to protect and preserve Medicare, not only for today's seniors, but for future generations. We will not allow Medicare to become a bargaining chip in the same old Washington shell game.

Mr. Speaker, this is not about pitting one generation against another or one party against another. It is about generational equity. We must start now to protect Medicare. The consequences for doing nothing and just criticizing are too expensive to ignore.

MEDICARE CUTS BEING FINANCED BY TAX CUTS FOR WEALTHY

(Mr. DE LA GARZA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DE LA GARZA. Mr. Speaker, this morning we've gathered to talk about the Medicare Program—it's health and its future, and specifically impending cuts. In recent weeks we've heard a lot of facts and figures, and we'll hear even more in the weeks to come as we proceed with our work. As we do, however, I think what we have to keep first and foremost in mind is that we're not talking just about numbers, or charts, or abstract concepts. What we're talking about is the Nation's seniors and their health and health care. I regard this to be among the most important issues we will address in this Congress.

Medicare is a program that is approaching its 30th anniversary. It is a program that has resulted in virtually universal coverage for the elderly. When I say this, I am referring to the fact that 99.1 percent of Americans over age 65 have health insurance coverage. There was a time when that wasn't the case, and that time was not all that long ago.

As we proceed with this debate, I think we all recognize and concur on both sides that there are many areas where we should look to make im-

provements. The task before us is how do we accomplish this goal in the most effective way.

One way is to reduce fraud and abuse. Every year millions of dollars are lost to health care fraud. That is why I am so pleased to see that the Department of Health and Human Services has formed a national hotline to report health care fraud involving the Medicare and Medicaid Programs. This tough new antifraud initiative is known as Operation Restore Trust. Its toll-free number is 1-800-HHS-TIPS [1-800-447-8477]. This is certainly a very strong weapon to fight health care fraud. However, it is an effort that will not be successful unless individuals participate in this fight. I encourage all citizens to help.

Now with specific regard to cuts we have heard our majority colleagues say they want to cut \$270 billion out of Medicare. What I find difficult to fathom is that the beneficiaries of these cuts will be those who are quite affluent and who do not need this type relief. Based on the current plans we have seen to overhaul Medicare, approximately 37 million beneficiaries will have their Medicare benefits cut.

The facts are as follows:

Those who get a tax break are the wealthiest 13 percent of seniors;

Those who pay for the tax break are the poorest 22 percent of seniors;

The average interest income of those who receive the tax break exceeds the total income of those who don't;

And over 4 million seniors of modest means will see a dramatic increase in their out-of-pocket costs.

This, to me, is grossly wrong. We should not cut benefits to one group that is so in need just to give a tax break to another. That is something I cannot condone nor can I support.

What we need to do is work to correct the program. We need to see that it works better and more efficiently—that it is a more streamlined and economic program. We must ensure America's seniors that Medicare will be around for the next 30 years. That must be the goal toward which we work. It certainly is mine.

RESTORING FAITH OF AMERICAN PEOPLE IN CONGRESS

(Mrs. SEASTRAND asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. SEASTRAND. Mr. Speaker, in this Congress promises made are promises kept. On the opening day of this Congress, we promised the American people that we would allow an outside, independent firm to audit the books of the House. This is something that had never been done before.

Now that the findings of this audit are seeing the light of day, we can see how very right we were in calling for an audit. It appears that in the previous Congress, the ledgers used to keep track of a \$700 million budget

were hand written. Let me repeat that. Hand written ledgers were used to keep track of a \$700 million budget.

Can anyone imagine a multi-million-dollar operation in the 1990's using hand-written ledgers? It is beyond baffling.

At first glance, one might say that this audit only confirms the worst suspicions about Congress. I disagree, this audit proves that elected officials can come to Washington to expose the truth. This audit proves that the Republican majority is helping to restore the faith of the American people.

REPUBLICAN MEDICARE CUTS AFFECT US ALL

(Mr. BENTSEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to the devastating Medicare cuts proposed in the Republican budget plan. The Republican plan reduces patient choice and cuts clinical research.

These cuts certainly will mean higher out-of-pocket expenses and reduced choice of doctors for our Nation's senior citizens.

But seniors won't be the only people affected. These cuts will reduce the quality and availability of health care for all Americans by cutting payments for medical education and clinical research.

These Republican cuts will harm some of our Nation's finest teaching hospitals, such as the University of Texas Health Sciences Center and Baylor College of Medicine in my district. The Association of American Medical Colleges estimates that these cuts will reduce payments for medical education by \$2.4 billion per year. The University of Texas system estimates it will lose \$21 million in Indirect Medical Education payments, and Baylor College of Medicine estimates it would lose \$15 million in such payments. These cuts will affect not just seniors but veterans as well since Baylor provides care to the VA Hospital in Houston.

Without sufficient funding, teaching hospitals will have to reduce the number of residents trained and the training offered. Such actions would reduce care for all Americans and kill our investment in quality health care.

Teaching hospitals also provide cutting-edge care for some of our Nation's sickest patients through their trauma centers, burn centers, cancer treatment centers, and other highly specialized facilities not available anywhere else. The proposed cuts will reduce access to these life-saving facilities.

These Medicare cuts are bad for seniors and bad for everyone else as well.

REPUBLICANS PLAN TO SAVE MEDICARE

(Mr. GANSKE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GANSKE. Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague from Texas on waste, fraud, and abuse in Medicare. Today my committee is holding hearings on waste, fraud, and abuse, a necessary part of the solution. But the Saint Paul pioneer press on June 27 had it right on Medicare. The headline blared, "Elderly win if budget is balanced: Despite cuts in Medicare growths, benefits would increase overall."

Under the GOP budget, Medicare will be one of the fastest growing programs in the Federal Government. In fact, comparing Medicare in the GOP budget with President Clinton's budget, one will find that the President calls for total Medicare spending of \$1.679 trillion between 1996 and 2002, while the GOP budget calls for \$1.601 trillion, and in 2002, the Republican balance the budget. We will be spending \$274 billion on Medicare. The President, under his proposal, will be spending \$289 billion. So what is the beef? Republicans plan to save Medicare period, and do not let anyone tell you differently.

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EXPOSING THE EMPIRE OF THE GENTLEMAN FROM GEORGIA

(Ms. MCKINNEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. MCKINNEY. Mr. Speaker, earlier this year while my colleague from Georgia was leading the Republicans in cutting school lunches, he managed to deflect some criticism by making a big deal out of a pet project, "Earning by Learning."

In Monday's Wall Street Journal, however, we learned exactly who was doing all the earning: it was none other than Mel Steely, a close friend of the Speaker and head of this program. According to the Wall Street Journal, 90 percent of the money that comes into "Earning by Learning" goes to Mr. Steely who is also authorized to write the official biography of Mr. GINGRICH.

Is this a new kind of child labor, by exploiting children's education as a way to take care of the Speaker's official biographer.

Mr. Speaker, it is time the empire supporting my Georgia colleague's cult of personality be exposed for what it really is—a scam.

SAVING MEDICARE WITHOUT MUCH HELP

(Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, we have a choice in this House.

We can preserve, protect, and improve Medicare—or we can watch it go bankrupt—as President Clinton's Cabinet has warned will happen—in less than 7 years.

These are facts. Doesn't sound like much of a choice, does it?

But liberal Democrats are going to try anything possible to frighten our senior citizens into believing Republicans want to cut Medicare.

Meanwhile, the G-O-P plan calls for increasing each Medicare patient's annual spending from \$4,800 to \$6,700 per year by 2002.

I'm a graduate of the Kentucky public school system—and back home that's not a cut, that's an increase.

I encourage our friends on the left to offer more ideas and fewer scare tactics.

We can preserve, protect and improve Medicare. The people in the real world, the private sector, have improved their health care system these past few years.

I'd say we ought to try and do the same.

SAVING MEDICARE

(Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the pollsters have told the Republicans they need to start telling the American people they are saving the Medicare system. But do you save it by cutting it by \$270 billion? The American people are not stupid. The American people can clearly see that a \$270 billion cut to their senior citizen health care system to finance a tax break is *not* saving the system.

Only in "Washington speak" could the Republicans say this: We are cutting \$270 billion from the Medicare system in order to save it from bankruptcy. And by the way, we are giving a \$245 billion tax cut. But we are really saving Medicare by cutting it. How can the Republican majority make this palatable? They say, "Tell the American people this is a steep cut to 'save' the system." Great idea, but the people in my district are much smarter than that. You do not save Medicare by cutting \$270 billion from it. The Republicans are not trying to save the Medicare system any more than Hugh Grant was asking for directions.

AUDIT RESULTS

(Mr. EHLERS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, yesterday marked another important step in our efforts to reform the internal operations of the House of Representatives. As a member of the Committee on House Oversight, I heard the testimony offered by the outside auditors retained to evaluate the books of the House, the first outside audit of House finances in over half a century.

The auditors state that they had "No opinion." That is a CPA's term for saying they could not express an opinion

because they could not even figure out the books in order to know whether or not they were in order.

Things are in such disarray in terms of the House finances and the House books that the auditors said we have to revamp the entire system.

I believe it is very important that we brought this situation to light. It is extremely important that we address the situation. As the Committee on House Oversight, we are pledged to bring this to the attention of the House of Representatives, to put the books in order, and to make sure that all the money spent by the House of Representatives is fully accounted for and properly expended.

REPUBLICAN SECRETS CONCERNING MEDICARE

(Mr. POMEROY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, it is becoming clear that the details of how the Republicans will cut Medicare are being held secret for as long as possible. At a time when millions of seniors are beginning to wonder, will my costs really go up more than \$1,000 a year out of my pocket, will my choice of physicians really be restricted, no hearings are being held and no details are being discussed.

We all know that the Republican budget, with its tax cuts for America's most privileged, means the cuts are just around the corner. There will be higher out-of-pocket costs for seniors, very considerable higher out-of-pocket costs. There will be restrictions on physician choice. But exactly how, the Republicans are not saying, because they are going to try and sucker punch the American people by floating the details of the plan only days before the vote, notwithstanding the fact that our seniors deserve the chance to see, to evaluate and to let their Members of Congress know what they feel about these plans.

The us how you will cut Medicare, Mr. Speaker.

The American people deserve to know.

PRESERVE AND PROTECT MEDICARE

(Mr. HERGER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, liberal Democrats would like nothing more than to frame the debate over Medicare in terms of generational conflict, where senior citizens are pitted against young people. This line of reasoning is beyond ludicrous.

The crisis that faces Medicare is something that affects everyone. Medicare must be protected and must be preserved for everyone. It must not be used to drive a wedge between people.